

Eurovision Song is not Pop

*How National Identity in Eurovision Defines the Function
of the Eurovision Song*

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration and analysis of how national identity is expressed in Eurovision songs and performances, using previously established theories on national identity in Europe and Eurovision. The hypothesis under which this research operates is that the inherent expression of national identity changes the function and interpretive experience of Eurovision songs throughout their lifetime, distinguishing them from the 'popular music sphere' as defined by Adorno, and therefore making Eurovision songs separate to pop songs. I find little has been written on the subject of Eurovision songs and performances in relation to popular music and art, nor their function and lifecycle. This thesis is divided into three chapters: the first outlines the theoretical structure that builds the analysis used in the case studies, using previously established theories to define national identity in the context of Eurovision. The second chapter – the case studies – is an analysis of four songs and performances from the Eurovision 2018 final using the framework developed in the first chapter. This chapter is intended to demonstrate the applicability of the framework presented in the first chapter, and how national identity is inherently expressed in Eurovision performances and songs. The third and final chapter discusses the ways in which this expression of national identity predetermines the function and 'interpretive experience' of a Eurovision song and its performance, therefore making it separate from the popular music sphere and not a pop song. This chapter also studies the lifecycle and temporality of the Eurovision song, and how this is part of the function, as predetermined by the arena in which it is presented.

It is hoped that this thesis can offer a distinction between Eurovision and popular music, and a greater understanding of how Eurovision song is interpreted.

Key words and terms: Eurovision, national identity, expression, performance, Unionist, Nationalist, language, tradition, song, function, interpretive experience

Introduction

This thesis is an analysis of performances from the 2018 Eurovision Song Contest Final, examining the ways national identity is expressed in these performances and how it affects the Eurovision song in its interpretive experience and function. Using these analyses, I shall research the hypothesis that Eurovision songs are not pop music with Adorno's definition of 'interpretive experience'¹ and the idea of predetermined function as a product of the contest as exemplified by Bolin in his comparison of Eurovision to the World's Fair.² There will be no attempt to redefine national identity, the ways in which it can be expressed in a Eurovision performance will be greatly discussed.

The definition of national identity in Europe as established by Smith and Raykoff & Tobin refer to two main ways national identity manifests: National and European.³ These two identities either work in conjunction or at opposition, but ultimately are distinguished by the ideas of nationalism and sovereignty, and unionism and Europe. However, even when used in reference to Eurovision, the effect this national and its expression has on the performance and the song is rarely mentioned or discussed. This thesis will do just that and explore the way national identity in Eurovision ultimately affects the interpretive experience of the Eurovision Song.

The term 'interpretive experience' was coined by Adorno in his 1941 thesis *On Popular Music* and it was used to describe how music is experienced, as he believed it is an inherently interpretive experience. He also argued that this experience is what assigns criteria to the music, ultimately determining if it belongs to what Adorno described as the superior 'serious music', or the inferior 'popular music' spheres. Miklitsch later redefines these spheres in a more egalitarian model, maintaining Adorno's experiential criteria but removing the hierarchal nature of 'serious' vs. 'popular' music.⁴

¹ Theodor Adorno, 'On Popular Music', *Zeitschrift Für Sozialforschung* 9, no. 1 (1941): 1.

² Göran Bolin, 'Visions of Europe: Cultural Technologies of Nation-States', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 9, no. 2 (June 2006): 193–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877906064030>.

³ Anthony D. Smith, 'National Identity and the Idea of European Unity', *International Affairs* 68, no. 1 (January 1992): 58–60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2620461>; Ivan Raykoff and Robert Deam Tobin, *A Song for Europe: Popular Music and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007): 25-28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1; Robert Miklitsch, *Roll over Adorno: Critical Theory, Popular Culture, Audiovisual Media* (Ithaca, UNITED STATES: State University of New York Press, 2006): 4, 54, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uunl/detail.action?docID=3407613>.

If national identity is an inherent aspect of Eurovision as a competition of nations, how does this manifest in the performance? Furthermore, because of the circumstances of the Eurovision Song Contest the Eurovision songs are composed specifically for the contest,⁵ does this affect the way the songs are experienced and if so, why? In order to address these questions, I shall examine how national identity is expressed in four case studies of performances from the 2018 Eurovision Final. This will show how national identity is expressed in today's Eurovision performances, and how this aligns with the definitions developed by Smith and Raykoff & Tobin.

After these case studies, the affect this expression of national identity has on the Eurovision song will be examined, using Adorno's definition of interpretive experience and the popular music sphere, considering Miklitsch's adjustments in *Roll Over Adorno*. This examination will show that the inherent national identity in Eurovision is what changes the interpretive experience of the Eurovision song and therefore removes it from the popular music sphere.

The thesis is presented in three chapters: the first establishing the definitions of national identity that will be used, and then defining the analytical structure used in the case studies. The second chapter is the case studies in which four performances from the 2018 Eurovision Final will be analysed and examined using the framework presented in chapter 1. The third and final chapter will discuss the effects of national identity on the Eurovision song, looking at its lifecycle and interpretive experience.

⁵ EBU, 'Rules - Eurovision Song Contest', accessed 28 June 2018, <https://eurovision.tv/about/rules>.

Chapter 1: National Identity in Eurovision

In this chapter, I shall outline how national identity manifests in Eurovision in many ways and through many facets of performance. By using Smith's and Raykoff & Tobin's already defined theories of national identity and its place in art and applying those to Eurovision performances, I create a model to analyse selected performances from the Eurovision Song Contest 2018 Final and determine how national identity has manifested in Eurovision.

I shall initially outline the spectrum model in which national identity in Eurovision exists using the aforementioned previously established theories, and with this considers how it manifests in performance. This chapter will offer the tools required for the case studies in the following chapter.

As identified by Anthony Smith: "there can be no collective cultural identity without shared memories or a sense of continuity on the part of those who feel they belong to that collectivity."⁶ This is repeated in Sharon Macdonald's *Memorylands*,⁷ stating that collective memory – 'ethno-history' as Smith describes it – is what binds and ultimately defines a collectivity and the associated culture and identity.

The two facets of national identity that Smith outlines aside from collective memory are shared continuity and the collective belief in a common destiny.⁸ Shared continuity is defined as successive generations of a given unit of population, inheriting cultural traditions, myth, history, politics, and knowledge from parents, grandparents, and elder members of the community.⁹ Although paradigms and circumstance will change, and to an extent so will the collective attitudes and knowledge, the fundamental cultural facets of shared continuity remain unchanged and are interpreted and perceived by each generation individually. The collective belief in a common destiny is derived from shared memory and shared continuity - in essence, a shared future for the shared past and present. The individual generational interpretations of shared cultural facets may change the direction of this future, and is the

⁶ Smith, 'National Identity and the Idea of European Unity'.

⁷ Sharon Macdonald and Christopher W. Tyler, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today*, Routledge, 18 July 2013, 1-4.

⁸ Ibid., 58-60

⁹ Ibid., 58-60

basis of most political discourse, but the collective belief in a common destiny regardless of direction is the driving force behind most national level politics and governance.

It is important to note that an objective re-telling of historical events is not the same as engaging in collective memory, nor is it the same as understanding and identifying with it, as ethno-history is the subjective perception and understanding of that history, which then directly contributes to the internal cultural discourse – the dialogue that is exclusive to those who identify with that culture and are involved in the shared memories and sense of continuity, that binds and defines a collectivity.

One problem that Smith brings up in his work is the dichotomy of National vs. European identity. I shall be using the terms Nationalist and Unionist to describe the two ends of the national identity spectrum as Nationalist refers to the celebration of sovereignty and individual nation's tradition, while Unionist refers to the homogenisation of Europe and dispelling of national differences in a politically and socially "united" continent, with Smith's definitions running parallel to this. The political – and by extension social – pressure for a unified Europe forces each facet of national identity into a duality that is both subjective and circumstantial, based on the facets of expression present in the performance.

Nationalists and Unionists both have different interpretations of how these dimensions as defined by Smith manifest in real life, and how they are experienced and ultimately classified. A Nationalist might other the cultural traditions and trends of other countries in order to bolster their own national identity. As stated by Peter Mandler: "we know what we are through what we are not."¹⁰ The main difference that separates Nationalists and Unionists is the interpretation of what we are not. The circumstances under which these facets are discussed or experienced also determine if they are National or European, which is something that changes frequently during the Eurovision Song Contest based on how it is interpreted, performed, and ultimately used.

Raykoff and Tobin mirror Smith's 'European' notion of national identity when discussing how it manifests in Eurovision in their 2017 book *A Song for Europe*. They remark that the European national identity is heavily associated with the EU and notions of European peace. Raykoff and Tobin make little distinction between a national and

¹⁰ Peter Mandler, 'What Is "National Identity"? Definitions and Applications in Modern British Historiography', *Modern Intellectual History* 3, no. 2 (2006): 272.

‘supranational’ identity, as by their definition within the realms of Eurovision the expression of nation-specific identity is under the umbrella of ‘European’ identity and “within the context of European unity”.¹¹ Eurovision is a Unionist and European ‘laboratory’ of identities by nature, however, the expression of nation specific identity and nationalism should not be seen as simply ‘peaceful management of diversity’, as like the European (and Unionist) expressions of national identity should not go without scrutiny when performed in an arena where the world is watching and taking notes on how nations perceive and present themselves on an international stage in relation to the rest of Europe and, to an extent, the world.

In this context, Nationalist and Unionist are used to describe the expression of national identity and how accessible it is to the audience (of whom are largely European). The definition of Nationalist expression of national identity encompasses many things, including the use of tradition and native language. It limits the accessibility of both seeing and identifying with the national identity and its associated narrative that is presented in the performance for those who do not know the language used. This makes it accessible only to those who are familiar with these traditions and expressions of national identity (mostly those who identify with that national identity), but nobody else. This exclusivity is what defines a Nationalist expression of identity.

Philip Bohlman uses the term ‘nationalist’ music to describe music considered aesthetically superior that “serves a nation-state in its competition with other nation-states”.¹² For Bohlman, nationalist music is political in nature because of its servitude to international competition. His definition of ‘national’ music that runs parallel to that of ‘nationalist’ music describes the facets of the Nationalist expression of national identity as described in this thesis, citing its linguistic and historical significance to a nation (or collectivity). He stresses the distinction between ‘nationalist’ and ‘national’ music – as although the two intersect, they are not mutually inclusive. For Bohlman, ‘nationalist’ music is defined by function, while ‘national’ music is defined by aesthetics.¹³

¹¹ Ivan Raykoff and Robert Deam Tobin, *A Song for Europe: Popular Music and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007): 25-28

¹² Philip V. Bohlman and Michael B. Bakan, *Music of European Nationalism: Cultural Identity and Modern History* (Santa Barbara, UNITED STATES: ABC-CLIO, 2004): 81-161

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uunl/detail.action?docID=265477>.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 81-161

Bohlman's model risks confusing the model presented in this thesis. The expression of national identity in the context of Eurovision can employ many different aesthetics – 'national' or otherwise – but is inherent to the Eurovision performance, and in that it defines the function of the Eurovision song. This definition of function shall be discussed in greater detail in the third chapter of this thesis.

The expression of a Unionist national identity is through the lack of national tradition and often without the use of a native tongue. To quote Luisa Passerini, quoted in Karen Fricker's *Performing the 'New' Europe*: "One cannot define oneself as European without questioning not only one's cultural heritage, ... but also one's intimate feelings and attitudes."¹⁴ It is, in essence, accessible to almost all members of the audience and can be identified with as 'European' by most.

Unionist should not be confused with 'modern' – although the two greatly intersect, they are not mutually inclusive. There are much broader European traditions that may exhibit the same social inclusivity that is often conflated with the Unionist sense of identity. For example, colonialism and the quest for European superiority are both long-held traditions (habits, perhaps) that betray the 'futuristic' vision of a united Europe of equal opportunity in the Unionist utopia but are still to be considered a Unionist expression of national identity when expressed in performance, as they are not nation-specific.

The main defining feature of a Unionist expression of national identity is that it is not nation specific. The performance does not reference tradition, myth, or language that is specific to a particular country or region or its history. The signifiers of the Unionist national identity expression refer to the much larger, often ambiguous identity that is attached to Europe as a whole.

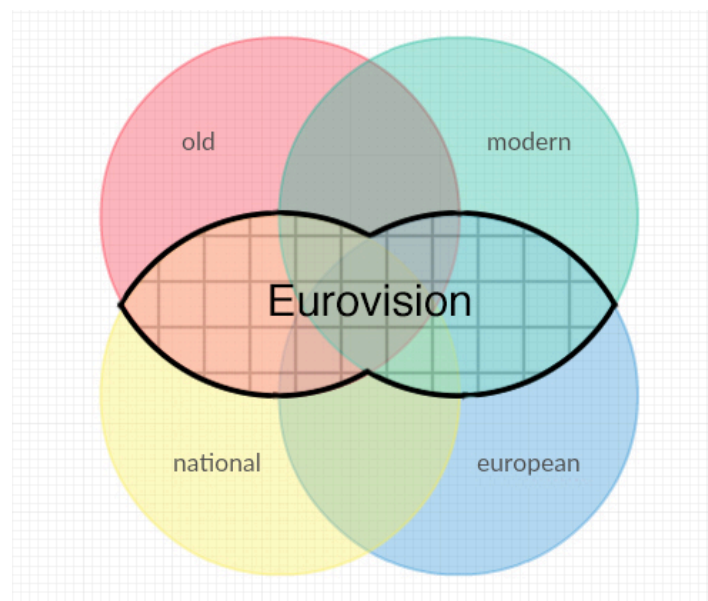
These two spectrums which build the spectrum of Nationalist vs. Unionist expression of national identity – 'National' vs. 'European', and 'old' vs. 'modern' – operate in tandem, and are, to a degree, mutually inclusive within Eurovision [fig.1]. The historical concept of nationalism as the ideology behind the 'nation' marries 'old' and 'national', whereas the

¹⁴ Luisa Passerini, *Images and Myths of Europe*, vol. 22, Collection Multicultural Europe (Oxford: P. Lang, 2002), 27; K. Fricker and M. Gluhovic, *Performing the 'New' Europe: Identities, Feelings and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2013): 32, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uunl/detail.action?docID=1209517>.

‘modern’ concept of a unified and poly-national Europe – an ‘imagined community’ with no tangible centre – holds the polar position.

This ‘imagined community’ is married with the modern and technological development – the very things that define such a community and allow it to exist, as theorised by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*,¹⁵ creating an intangible unification of Europe online. Anderson described these imagined communities’ genesis in the development of modern communication technologies, letting individuals who are physically scattered across great distances identify with a single community, bound by the same criteria as described by Smith.¹⁶

National identity in the arena of Eurovision is something of a balancing act – carefully orchestrated and staged performances in which a nation allows a small window into how it perceives itself, governs itself, views its place in Europe, its place in the future, and how it prioritises its past.



[fig.1] National Identity in Eurovision¹⁷

¹⁵ Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed (London; New York: Verso, 1983): 6.

¹⁶ Smith, 58-60.

¹⁷ Fabian Leach, *National Identity in Eurovision*, May 2018, Diagram, May 2018.

National identity, as it is present in Eurovision, is never from an individual perspective. Despite each nation being represented by an individual or individuals, and the music and performance created by individuals, a Eurovision performance is not an expression of individual national identity - the identity that is present is that of collective national identity. An individual expression of national identity is inherently subjective – it is someone’s own interpretation of how they identify in relation to nationality. The collective expression of national identity is not a personal interpretation of a single person’s identity, as it involves only the common factors that define the collectivity and the common aspects of identity that individuals of that collectivity would share.

The performance is a vehicle for the collective national identity to be presented in a far more passive, background manner.¹⁸ The artists as individuals in Eurovision are not the subject of the competition, as the performance is the vehicle for an identity that is not uniquely their own. Although the collective national identity is not necessarily attached to the artist, it is attached to their performance regardless of its musical or lyrical context. The collective national identity is the reason the song and performance exist at all, and therefore is inherent in Eurovision Song Contest songs and performances.

Smith’s dimensions of national identity and nationhood are outlined as:¹⁹

- The territorial boundedness of separate cultural populations in their own ‘homelands’
- The shared nature of myths of origin and historical memories of the community
- The common bond of a mass, standardised culture
- A common territorial division of labour, with mobility for all members and ownership of resources by all members in the homeland
- The possession by all members of a unified system of common legal rights and duties under common laws and institutions

¹⁸ Jordan, *The Modern Fairy Tale*: 49-73;

¹⁹ Smith, ‘National Identity and the Idea of European Unity’: 58-60.

These dimensions form the basis of the facets of national identity expression which will be described later. In relation to the analytical structure put forward in this thesis, these dimensions give context and definition to the subject of national identity, allowing it to be analysed when expressed through performance. However, these dimensions as put forward by Smith, confuse structured, hierarchical society and government with culture and identity. In the context of Eurovision, such things cannot be included as a part of the definition of national identity and the analysis of its expression, nor can they be included as a facet of performance, but often run parallel to the analysis to offer context to the performance.

One of the main political problems that arises frequently in Europe is the subject of national borders. In a relatively short period of time, the borders and official names of countries have changed, sometimes multiple times, meaning that not every generation has the same collective memory and by extension national identity, despite belonging to the same geographical location. Due to this, language has been a much more important facet of national identity within Europe than outside of Europe. In Holt and Gubbins, it is noted that “it was in Europe that language became a key element in the emergent nation-states that replaced the old dynasties and empires. In many cases these new nation-states came to share their names with the languages that were so vital for their political legitimacy.”²⁰ They go on to say that “identity is not a mere reflection of reality, a simple form of self-awareness, but rather a socially constructed phenomenon.”²¹

The use of English lyrics in the Eurovision song contest has gradually increased, making exceptions for the years 1966-1972 and then 1978-1998 when songs were required to be in a national language. After the rule was lifted in 1999, English language songs became increasingly common.²² The top three performances of the Eurovision Song Contest 2018 final were all in English. The songs that were not in English – of which there were few – tended to present a Nationalist approach to national identity, employing traditional instrumentation, musical stylings, dance, costume, or myth – as outlined by Smith in his

²⁰ Paul Gubbins and Mike Holt, *Beyond Boundaries: Language and Identity in Contemporary Europe*, vol. 122 (Multilingual Matters, 2002): 1.

²¹Smith, ‘National Identity and the Idea of European Unity’: 58-60.

²² Kira Schacht and Glenn Swann, ‘How English Is the Eurovision Song Contest?’, *The Guardian*, 13 May 2017, sec. Television & radio, <http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/datablog/2017/may/13/how-english-is-the-eurovision-song-contest>.

dimensions of national identity as “the shared nature of myths of origin and historical memories of the community.”²³

The particular expression of identity – Nationalist or Unionist – is signified through the music and performance and such things as:

- Language
- Musical styling
- Instrumentation
- Choreography
- Costume
- Connoted myth
- Associated imagery

If and how these facets are performed in relation to each other and the nations that are represented in these performances are the basis of the case study analysis in the following chapter, determining how national identity manifests in Eurovision and creating context for each case study performance. In the rest of this chapter, I shall further describe these facets in relation to Eurovision performance.

Language exists in Eurovision as a facet of identity not only in lyrics and song titles, but also, in artist names, visual cues (text overlaid or projected during the performance), Eurovision postcards (the short video that introduces each artist and country), in onomatopoeia as an extension of verbal communication, and in interviews. For example, the Ukrainian singer in Eurovision 2018 sang in English, but conducted his entire interview in Ukrainian with a translator.²⁴

Language is the first, and most basic, proclamation of national identity. On the Eurovision stage this becomes a binary of mother tongue vs. English (in the instance of English not being the mother tongue or national language). English becomes the common

²³ Smith, ‘National Identity and the Idea of European Unity’: 58-60.

²⁴ João Nuno Nogueira, ‘Eurovision Song Contest Grand Final 2018’, 5 December 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AXTB-iShio&t=40s>.

language of a united Europe,²⁵ a symptom the modern homogenised state of the Unionist national identity, while the native mother tongue becomes the Nationalist sovereign identity in the Eurovision arena, making the accessibility to truly understanding and identifying with the performance much narrower, as only those who understand the language used will understand what is said.

As included under the umbrella of verbal communication, the use of onomatopoeia, as explained by Friedrich Müller in 1891 are “mere playthings” and cannot be considered part of the language system.²⁶ This was reiterated and further developed by Earl R. Anderson in 1998 with his four objections of onomatopoeia:²⁷

1. Onomatopoeias are conventional signs, not imitative echoes;
2. Even if onomatopoeias are imitative, they are not non-arbitrary;
3. Onomatopoeias exist on the margin of language, not as part of language;
4. Onomatopoeias do not accurately imitate natural sounds.

This definition of onomatopoeia shows that, in this analysis, language and onomatopoeia cannot be considered the same, despite both being forms of verbal communication. However, onomatopoeia can be considered a signifier of expression of national identity in conjunction with language as phonetics can differ across cultures.

Musical stylings are common signifiers of identity in music, and not just reserved for national identity. Punk, for example, offers a culture that many can identify with that surrounds a musical style and philosophy.²⁸ Traditional musical stylings are nationally significant folk or historically significant stylings that are clearly associated with a collective memory or myth (as outlined in the fundamental aspects of national identity) were used incredibly sparsely in Eurovision 2018, many acts performing with more contemporary stylings similar to that of popular chart music, with little musical indication of a Nationalist

²⁵ David Nunan, ‘English as a Global Language’, *TESOL Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2001): 605, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588436>.

²⁶ F Müller, *The Science of Language Founded on Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution in 1861 and 1863*, 2 Vols (New York, 1891).

²⁷ Earl R. Anderson, *A Grammar of Iconism* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; 1998): 129; Hessein Seyyedi and Elham Akhlagi, ‘The Study of Onomatopoeia in the Muslims’ Holy Write: Qur’an’, *Language in India* 13, no. 5 (May 2013): 18.

²⁸ Stuart Hanscomb, ‘Do It Yourself: Existentialism as Punk Philosophy’, (*University of Glasgow*, 30 September 2011): 5.

identity. The use of 'traditional' styles invokes the sense of 'old', and as illustrated in fig.1, that of the Nationalist sovereign identity by association.

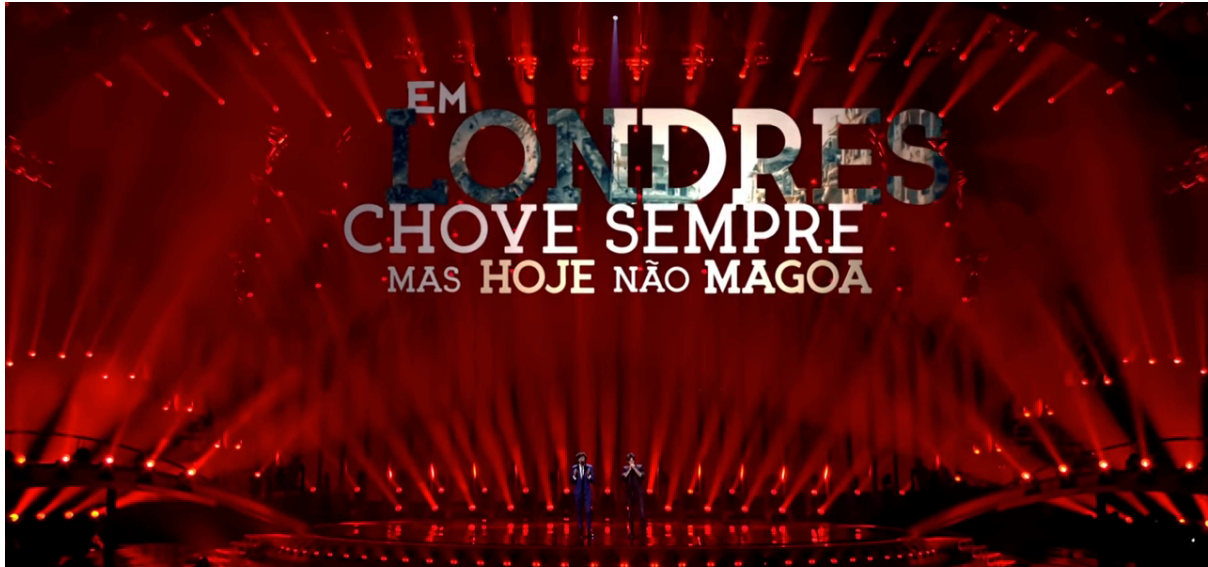
Instrumentation is a major part of musical tradition, heavily entwined with musical stylings, for example 'folk' instruments such as balalaika, accordion, bodhrán, pan pipes, dulcimer, flute, and classical guitar. The standard instrumentation of Eurovision is now increasingly synthesised, often without any performing musicians on stage besides the singer(s). This turn from a 'physical' instrumental performance (which in Eurovision is miming along to a backing track) to a mechanical playback of the instrumentals can inhibit the choreographic and visual aspect of a 'traditional' instrumental performance, and therefore the expression of national identity in the performance of tradition.

Connoted myth, as described in Smith's fundamental aspects of national identity and the collective knowledge of a nationality can also be found (mostly) in the visual aspect of Eurovision Song Contest performances as a facet of the expression of national identity in performance.²⁹ This is expressed by something often unique to a nation or collectivity. Either through lyrics, choreography, costume, visual or musical cues; myths, fables, origin stories, and fairytales can be subtly or deliberately included in a performance.

National myths, fables, origin stories, and fairytales have an ancient quality about them which owes less to their age than their importance in collective memory. This means that the Nationalist national identity is most often mutually inclusive with the performance of myth, and in the arena of Eurovision, this performance is becoming increasingly rare with the growing frequency of the expression of the Unionist national identity.

Associated imagery in Eurovision is inherently technological, as it is either digitally overlaid on the screen, like in Italy's Eurovision 2018 performance [fig.2], or projected on large LED screens during the performance. Associated imagery is not the same as connoted myth, although the two often intersect. As stated before, connoted myth is the inclusion or reference to fables or fairytales that hold historical and cultural significance to a collectivity. Associated imagery can be a vehicle for this connoted myth, or other graphics that reference culturally significant imagery that can be anywhere in the Nationalist – Unionist spectrum.

²⁹ Smith: 58-60.



[fig. 2]: Italy's live performance using digitally overlaid text³⁰

The obvious technological aspect of large scale video playback on a high resolution screen in an arena and the engagement with it on stage while expressing a national identity is inherently a 'modern' expression that often intersects with the Unionist display of national identity. But this can be countered with images of tradition, history, and nationalism, making this facet of national identity expression the only truly hybrid format that is easily manipulated.

This expression of national identity that is inherent to a Eurovision performance and therefore, a Eurovision song, is what defines the function of a Eurovision song. This predetermined function and 'interpretive experience' as coined by Adorno, and later redefined by Miklitsch,³¹ is what separates the Eurovision song from the popular music sphere – which itself is defined by the 'interpretive experience' of popular music.³² This will be discussed in greater detail in the third chapter once the definition of national identity expression that has been presented in this chapter is used in the analytical case studies in the following chapter.

Eurovision is an arena for national identity, often binary in nature and forces a dichotomy of national sovereignty and a united Europe. On such an international stage, even national identity is heavily politicised, and according to Smith, it is essentially reduced

³⁰ Nogueira, 'Eurovision Song Contest Grand Final 2018'.

³¹ Miklitsch, *Roll over Adorno*: 4, 54.

³² Adorno, 'On Popular Music': 1.

to pan-European relations expressed through engagement with tradition or lack thereof.³³

The fundamental aspects (as listed above) of performative national identity are the signifiers of where the performance lies in the Nationalist vs. Unionist national identity spectrum. It has been increasingly common for Eurovision Song Contest performers to discard tradition and therefore the old sovereign notions of national identity in exchange for a Unionist technocracy that homogenises identity in Europe and expresses itself through modern innovation and technology.

³³ Smith, 'National Identity and the Idea of European Unity': 58-60.

Chapter 2: Expression of National Identity in Eurovision

[Case Studies]

Using the facets of performative national identity outlined in the previous chapter, I shall analyse the two lowest and two highest scoring countries entries after both the jury and audience votes in Eurovision final 2018. These four Eurovision performances are from Finland and Portugal – the two lowest scoring countries--and from Israel and Cyprus – the two highest scoring countries. These four songs from the top and bottom of the scoreboard show the extremes in the scope of songs in the Eurovision final in regard to jury and voter reception. Not all facets are relevant to the performances analysed, especially connoted myth and associated imagery, so most of the analyses will only include language, musical stylings, and choreography.

Finland

The first of these case studies is Finland's performance. Finland's Eurovision 2018 performance was by Saara Aalto, with the song 'Monsters' (at 1:28:46 in the Eurovision grand finale broadcast).³⁴ This entry came second to last in this year's competition with a total of 46 points from the juries and audience votes. Like the vast majority of Eurovision 2018 finalists, this performance was a solo singer and dancers performing a contemporary song, with lyrics in English to an instrumental backing track without any 'live' performance aside from vocals.

The instrumentation in the backing track uses a polyphonic percussive synth design which was duplicated in the mix and pitched down two octaves – a common technique in popular music production.³⁵ A synth pad (a polyphonic synth with virtually infinite sustain) an octave below operates in parallel harmony, while a saw wave polyphonic bass maintained a pulsing rhythm. The drums, like the rest of the instrumentation, employ a

³⁴ Saara Aalto, *Monsters*, Eurovision Performance, 2018; Nogueira, 'Eurovision Song Contest Grand Final 2018'.

³⁵ '5 Popular Music Production Techniques and How to Create Them', accessed 31 July 2018, <http://www.izotope.com/en/blog/music-production/5-popular-music-production-techniques-and-how-to-create-them.html>.

typical breakbeat style kit – which is also part of the popular music producer’s current arsenal.

This backing track is typical of Eurodance, which itself takes a lot from Scandinavian dance music (such as Swedish House Mafia or Avicii), which itself has melodic parallels with old Nordic folk and nursery rhymes (‘Nuku Nuku’ for example).³⁶

The use of English in the lyrics, as established in the previous chapter, is a signifier of the Unionist European national identity, and is not uncommon for countries such as Finland to use in song. It is evident that being a member state is very important and highly valued by the Finnish state, from reports written by the Finnish government.³⁷

Aside from the musical aspect of the performance, the costumes [fig.3] worn were typical of the visual spectacle of Eurovision – outlandish, glitzy, and glamorous – Saara Aalto wore a sequined cropped tunic with silver ‘skeletal’ jewellery and embellishments, and dramatic eye make-up stretching to her hairline. This costume is not nation-specific, making it an indirect expression of the Unionist national identity. However, the backing dancers wore grey uniforms, similar to that of army privates, with leather harnesses either pulled from a Madonna video or a sex dungeon. This was apparently a metaphor for queer culture (although never explicitly mentioned by Aalto herself), and a nod to Lady Gaga and her use of the word ‘monsters’ to describe her fans – many of whom are queer. This is something of a running theme in Eurovision, which is often described as unapologetically camp “with their celebration of everything kitsch and diva-esque”, and thus a staple of European gay culture.³⁸

³⁶ Merja Soria, *Nuku Nuku - Ancient Finnish Lullaby*, video, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFCixLn9qRw>.

³⁷ Mosaiikki ry, ‘Finland’s Involvement in the EU’, *Europarlamentti.Info* (blog), accessed 24 June 2018, <http://europarlamentti.info/en/decision-making/Finland-involvement-in-the-EU/>.

³⁸ Peter Rehberg, ‘Winning Failure. Queer Nationality at the Eurovision Song Contest’, *SQS–Suomen Queer-Tutkimuksen Seuran Lehti* 2, no. 2 (2007): 60; Catherine Baker, ‘The “Gay Olympics”? The Eurovision Song Contest and the Politics of LGBT/European Belonging’, *European Journal of International Relations* 23, no. 1 (March 2017): 99, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066116633278>.



[fig.3]: Saara Aalto's ESC 2018 Final performance and the costumes worn³⁹

Conchita Wurst, winner of Eurovision 2014 for Austria, was seen as a political spokesperson that year following Russia's criminalization of 'gay propaganda'. Considering Finland's long relationship with and occupation by Russia, the use of queer culture in this performance follows the same vein of protest that was exemplified by the votes for Conchita Wurst's performance in 2014.⁴⁰ As Baker wrote in *The "Gay Olympics"*: "her participation and image emerged within these contexts."⁴¹ The contexts being that of a 'Europe' against Russia opposition, founded in the camp nature of Eurovision and the anti-homophobia directed at Russia's policies, and "a narrative of progression in terms of sexual citizenship linked to European liberalization."⁴²

It can be construed that the military costumes that the dancers wear are symbolic of the militant LGBTQ+ activism of recent years and holds an anti-Russian sentiment like any deliberate expression of queer culture in Eurovision in the past five to ten years.⁴³ The use of voguing – an inherently queer dance style that holds its roots in the New York Ball Scene

³⁹ Nogueira, 'Eurovision Song Contest Grand Final 2018'.

⁴⁰ Anni Kangas, 'Beyond Russophobia: A Practice-Based Interpretation of Finnish–Russian/Soviet Relations', *Cooperation and Conflict* 46, no. 1 (March 2011): 41–51, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836710396776>.

⁴¹ Baker, 'The "Gay Olympics?": 99

⁴² *Ibid.*, 99.

⁴³ Catherine Baker, 'Monsters, Metaphors and Military Chic: Saara Aalto on Stage and the Queer Politics of Kitsch', *ESC Insight* (blog), 5 December 2018, <http://escinsight.com/2018/05/12/monsters-metaphors-military-chic-saara-aalto-stage-queer-politics-kitsch/>.

among drag queens and the queer community - places the queer identity with the dancers in the temporal space of this performance (as it is their intention in this performance to repeat the sentiment of the song and by extension, Saara Aalto, a queer woman herself).⁴⁴

The choreographical expression of queer identity in uniform expresses a militant attitude towards homophobia in military chic - which has been part of the drag repertoire as 'military realness', as seen in the documentary film *Paris is Burning*.⁴⁵ This militant anti-homophobia and exclusion currently only extends to Russia from the audience and non-academic discourse, which in turn is reflected in the long-standing anti-Russia sentiment held in Finland.⁴⁶ The performance is a political gesture towards Russia and Russian identity. Queer rights are being advocated on the Eurovision stage by subverting normally oppressive military tropes. There is a great deal of Russophobia in Finland, but - as stated by Kangas - unlike most Western countries Finland also portrays the East (read as Russia) as a potential friend.⁴⁷ Kangas also draws from Kirby when describing Russophobia in Finland: "Russophobia was used to replace class antagonism by a sense of national solidarity".⁴⁸ It can be argued that the circumstances following the Finnish Civil War – in which Finland gained independence from the Russian Empire - allowed the emergence of Russophobia in an independent Finland.⁴⁹ Russia has always offered an 'other' – albeit a negative one – for Finnish identity to be built off: we are Finnish because we are (no longer) Russian.

This, when coming from Finland and presented in English, makes the Finnish anti-Russia sentiment both accessible outside of Finland and modernized in the frame of relevant and relatable queer struggles and activism, and by extension normalizing Russophobia not only in Finland but in the rest of Europe.⁵⁰ However, as demonstrated before in this text, the politicisation of Eurovision performances is the product of representing a nation on an international stage that is defined by European countries and

⁴⁴ Adam Bloodworth, 'Eurovision's Saara Aalto Comes out as Lesbian Ahead of "Sassy and Fun" Album and New Single Monster', *Pinknews* (blog), 21 March 2018, <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/03/21/eurovisions-saara-aalto-comes-out-as-lesbian-ahead-of-sassy-and-fun-album-and-new-single-monster/>.

⁴⁵ Baker, 'Monsters, Metaphors and Military Chic: Saara Aalto on Stage and the Queer Politics of Kitsch'; Jennie Livingston, *Paris Is Burning* (Miramax, 1991).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁴⁷ Kangas, 'Beyond Russophobia': 41-51.

⁴⁸ D.A. Kirby, *Finland in the Twentieth Century*, Reprint (University of Minneapolis Press, 1980): 52.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 41-51.

⁵⁰ Baker, 'Monsters, Metaphors and Military Chic: Saara Aalto on Stage and the Queer Politics of Kitsch'.

affected by the relations between them, and not necessarily through intention or deliberate subtext.

This performance came second to last in the Eurovision 2018 finals, much to the surprise of Aalto herself who claimed it one of her best stage performances and cited the nature of the competition as the reason for her low score. Finland has had a poor track record in Eurovision, winning only once and finishing last nine times in the 57 years it has competed.

Political alliances are often seen as the main motivation in jury voting, as neighbouring and allied countries often vote for each other in collusion blocs. Traditionally, Scandinavian countries vote for each other (Finland included), but outside of this alliance, few countries support Finland. However, in Eurovision 2018 even the Scandinavian countries (excluding Estonia) scored Finland comparably lower than in previous years. Evidence suggests that since the 1990s, Finland's collusive partners have voted for it with diminishing frequency,⁵¹ leaving it in many on-way voting relationships, and therefore with a lower score.⁵²

Portugal

Portugal's 2018 Eurovision entry 'O Jardim' (at 44:58 in the Eurovision grand final broadcast)⁵³ performed by Claudia Pascoal and composed by Isaura Santos, is the only song in this case study that is not in English. It is a standard, stripped back song, and translated from Portuguese, the song title is 'The Garden'.

Portugal was the host nation for Eurovision 2018, and their 'nautical' theme with the slogan "All Aboard!"⁵⁴ was intended to be a celebration of the country's long history of seafaring and exploration, a notable name of this period being Christopher Columbus.

The staging of this song (and the rest of Eurovision 2018) included massive carved pieces of wood that moved on mechanical struts [fig.4] on which light could be projected, in

⁵¹ Alexander V. Mantzaris, Samuel R. Rein, and Alexander D. Hopkins, 'Examining Collusion and Voting Biases Between Countries During the Eurovision Song Contest Since 1957', *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation* 21, no. 1 (2018): 8–11.

⁵² 'Full Results - Eurovision Song Contest', *eurovision.tv*, 2018, <https://eurovision.tv/history/full-split-results>.

⁵³ Nogueira, 'Eurovision Song Contest Grand Final 2018'; Claudia Pascoal, *O Jardim*, Eurovision Performance, 2018.

⁵⁴ Paul Jordan and Stijn Smulders, 'All Aboard! Lisbon Welcomes 42 Countries to Eurovision 2018.', *Eurovision.Tv* (blog), 11 July 2017, <https://eurovision.tv/story/all-aboard-slogan-for-eurovision-2018>.

place of the usual LED screens on which graphics enhanced the performance and assisted in the expression of national identity with the aforementioned associated imagery in previous Eurovision performances from past years. The wooden stage backdrop was supposedly intended to represent a shipyard, and therefore the dock from where cultural exploration and new horizons were launched.⁵⁵ In choosing this nautical theme represented by imagery of seafaring trade, navies, and international conquest, Portugal committed itself to the Nationalist expression of national identity by celebrating specifically Portuguese seafaring.



[fig.4]: The stage for ESC 2018 in Lisbon⁵⁶

On the surface, this song is a standard alternative and minimalist song, but employs the traditional stylings of Fado – in which a song switches between major and minor key – and ‘rubato’, in which the tempo either speeds up or slows down at the discretion of the singer for emotive effect. Three of the five acts that performed for Portugal – the two opening acts and the entry performance – employed Fado tropes, with one of the opening songs titled ‘Fado’.

There is a Portuguese connoted myth in which Fado is a form of protest against the Salazar dictatorship. The intended purpose of Fado in Eurovision 2018 may not have been to

⁵⁵ Paul Jordan, ‘Exclusive: The Stage for Lisbon 2018 Is Revealed!’, *Eurovision.Tv* (blog), 12 May 2017, <https://eurovision.tv/story/2018-stage-design-revealed>.

⁵⁶ Jordan.

spark a revolution or to overthrow a fascist dictatorship and was most likely intended to be a light connection with musical tradition that is accessible to an audience outside of those who are familiar with the shared memory of the Portuguese national identity, but for those familiar with the protesting history of Fado, this connotation cannot be removed.⁵⁷

The legitimacy of this connoted myth is still reliant on the broadness of the knowledge of Fado's role in anti-fascist protest in the 1950s. However, Fado was used again in anti-austerity protests in 2013 and 2014, and therefore is not just reserved for the revolution in the 1950s, and in turn has again become part of the political repertoire of today's generation of Portuguese protesters.⁵⁸

There is a contradiction in the use of Fado – with its roots deep in working class protest and anti-fascism – while celebrating a more distant history of colonialism and conquest virtually binary in the contrast of these paradigms, throughout the staging of the whole of the competition this year. The values held by the seafaring heroes of Portugal's nautical past are analogous with the ideologies that were fought against by the anti-fascists and working-class rebellion in the Spanish and Portuguese Civil Wars of the 1950s. This collective memory of anti-fascism brought up by Fado inadvertently impaired the celebration of tradition that was presented in almost every aspect of the broadcast of the Eurovision 2018 final of which Portugal had creative control, despite the apolitical intentions in the employment of this musical tradition.

Portugal came last in Eurovision 2018, and as mentioned before collusive voting blocs are becoming more frequent in the jury voting. Although Portugal and Spain have a history of collusive voting, this relationship has not been upheld in the past five years.⁵⁹ Without Spain, Portugal is left without a mutual voting partner.

⁵⁷ Lila Ellen Gray, 'Memories of Empire, Mythologies of the Soul: Fado Performance and the Shaping of Saudade', *University of Illinois for Society for Ethnomusicology* 51, no. 1 (2007): 109.

⁵⁸ Dario Martinelli, 'Songs of Social Protest and Lyrics', in *Give Peace a Chant: Popular Music, Politics and Social Protest*, ed. Dario Martinelli (Kaunas: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 44, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50538-1_3.

⁵⁹ Mantzaris, Rein, and Hopkins, 'Examining Collusion and Voting Biases Between Countries During the Eurovision Song Contest Since 1957': 8-11

Israel

Israel won the Eurovision 2018 final with 'Toy' by Netta Barzilai (at 1:49:46 in the Eurovision grand final broadcast)⁶⁰ – a song written about the '#MeToo' movement that gained traction online last year, allowing victims of sexual assault or harassment the space to speak out and join the online feminist discourse. Netta claimed her performance was a celebration of difference and indiscriminate acceptance, despite representing Israel which no more than three days after the Eurovision victory awarded to them, massacred unarmed Palestinians in the Gaza strip.⁶¹ To represent a nation that has a very recent history of state oppression on the Eurovision stage, defies the banner of 'peace and unity' under which Eurovision was founded in the height of the Cold War in 1953.⁶²

The use of the English language in the lyrics, much like with Finland and many other countries, is an expression of the Unionist national identity as English is not only the common language of many international European politics, but also fast becoming the common language of the greater non-academic discourse among Europeans.⁶³ In the case of Israel, to perform in English is the taking of a stance of political neutrality as it is not an EU member state. Although it is not officially a part of Europe neither geographically nor politically, to have a place on the Eurovision stage is to have time dedicated to an expression of a national identity and a political commentary on Europe. If this song were to be performed in Hebrew, for example, the cultural connotations to the Israeli government and its military, and the celebration of Israel as a 'Zionist state' would be a subject of critique for those far more critical of Israel and its actions.

When Israel is represented on the Eurovision stage in English, it participates in the expression of the Unionist national identity but from the perspective of an 'outsider' (not 'fully European'). By using English, and therefore representing the Unionist national identity, the question of how European identity should manifest arises, along with the potential socio-political impact of an Israeli singing in Hebrew might have during a time where many people are critical of Israel and the actions of its military.

⁶⁰ Nogueira, 'Eurovision Song Contest Grand Final 2018'; Netta Barzilai, *Toy*, Eurovision Performance, 2018.

⁶¹ BBC, 'Israel's Gaza Response "wholly Disproportionate" - UN Rights Chief', *Bbc.Com* (blog), 18 May 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-44167900?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c207p54m4rqt/israel-the-palestinians&link_location=live-reporting-story.

⁶² EBU, '50 Years of Eurovision', *EBU Dossier*, 2004.

⁶³ Nunan, 'English as a Global Language': 605.

As mentioned before, the cultural connotations of Hebrew in Eurovision would garner heavy criticism from sceptics of Israel and those who accuse it of being a Zionist state. Also, to use a native language aside from English in Eurovision is associated with the notions of old tradition and nationalism, for which the criticisms of Israel are often founded in. For example, the changing of Arab street names to Hebrew ones was heavily criticised.⁶⁴

Turning away from the core expression of national identity in the performance, and towards the musical stylings, they are typically that of a pop song - employing the 'orchestra hit', which has become increasingly popular again in the trend of creating 'retro' beats, using old cliché musical stylings and ornamentation such as this, found in many 1980s hip-hop and pop songs.⁶⁵ Little suggests any nationally specific traditions involved in the composition of this song, besides the overall Eurovision tradition of utilizing basic pan-cultural comedy (in this case, chicken noises) that is child-like in nature. This childlike humour reinforces the sense of European innocence in Eurovision, alleviating the collective guilt of past and present atrocities and betrayals in the continent, which naturally extends to Israel in this performance.

Moving on from the musical stylings, the choreography is also exaggerated and comical, implementing the 'Birdy Dance' (imitating a chicken) frequently. This choreographical expression of comedic Eurovision tradition is one of the few examples of such that is also an expression of the Unionist national identity in that it is engagement with a tradition and shared cultural artefact that is recognised by the majority of Europeans that are familiar with Eurovision (and fans from across the globe).

Although this article by Ross focusses on the rich source of comedy that Eurovision offers, it also shows that comedy is an integral part of the campness of the Eurovision Song Contest, as exemplified by the hosts of the 2016 ESC final with their self-referential comedic interval performance 'Love Love Peace Peace',⁶⁶ using tropes from past winning performances to create an over-the-top ballad on an over-crowded stage. Although

⁶⁴ Joseph Nevo, *King Hussein and the Evolution of Jordan's Perception of a Political Settlement with Israel*, Reprint (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2006): 92-93.

⁶⁵ Robert Fink, 'The Story of ORCH5, or, the Classical Ghost in the Hip-Hop Machine', *Popular Music* 24, no. 03 (4 October 2005): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143005000553>.

⁶⁶ Deutschland, Eurovision Song Contest, *Love, Love, Peace, Peace - How to Create the Perfect Eurovision Performance | Tutorial*, accessed 27 July 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cv6tgnx6jTQ>.

intended to be humorous, it made a valid point that comedy is one of the key factors in an entertaining (and often winning) performance.

This childlike comedy is simple and one dimensional enough to be understood and found humorous by almost everyone regardless of age or cultural background. This light and accessible humour offers a catharsis which frequently proves effective, offering alleviation from the stress of the politicisation of each performance – not necessarily by the performer, but by those who receive it, and the overbearing political associations of each nation, which cannot be separated from the musical performance.⁶⁷

It is noteworthy that the backing singers/dancers were imitating chickens and roosters with the Hebrew (and many other languages) onomatopoeia 'kukuriku', as opposed to the English 'cock-a-doodle-doo'. The choreographical association is obvious to anyone who does not know non-English onomatopoeia, making any exclusivity essentially moot. As established by Anderson in his four objections of onomatopoeia, and outlined in the first chapter of this thesis, onomatopoeia is not on par with language in its significance to culture and identity but is still a signifier of cultural lexicon and therefore the larger identity that is attributed to it. However, it does certainly signify a bilingual aspect to the lyrics and performance that is in conjunction with the use of English, that highlights further that English is neither the native language, nor the native culture of the performers and composers.

Bilingualism with English is something that is becoming increasingly common across Europe among nationals of non-English speaking countries and is something that is a component of the Unionist national identity. Signifiers of English bilingualism are signifiers of a united Europe in broken English of varying degrees. It should also be noted that the imperfections themselves are what creates this solidarity, along with the experience of being bilingual.

In addition to the musical stylings, the costume used in the Israeli performance was an imitation of a geisha's kimono in loud colours with printed flames on the trim [fig.5]. This,

⁶⁷ Samantha Ross, 'Why Is The Eurovision Song Contest The World's Favourite Comedy Vehicle?', *ESC Insight* (blog), 13 September 2017, <http://escinsight.com/2017/09/13/eurovision-song-contest-comedy-lovely-horse-humor/>.

along with the plastic maneki-neko on shelves and the comedic aspects of the performance gives a sense of insincerity and disrespect to Japanese culture.

Although the “intention” of these costumes was to imitate the aesthetics of traditional dress, the traditions are not of Israel, and therefore are not an expression of Nationalist national identity. None of the aspects of the costume are truly traditional – little research⁶⁸ was made in the design and creation of a traditional Japanese kimono with respect and sincerity – the aesthetics were drawn from preconceived caricatures of Japanese culture, simplified and binarized by Western Orientalism.⁶⁹



[fig.5] Netta’s “kimono” and the wall of meneki-neko in the ESC 2018 Final⁷⁰

Orientalism, especially in Europe, infantilises and exoticises cultural artefacts of non-Western and non-white nationalities and cultures, often reducing them to the basic aesthetics of objects and mannerisms.⁷¹ By appropriating another culture’s aesthetics and traditional dress, Israel is expressing a Unionist national identity by not adhering to its own traditions. This Unionist identity and European unity is not defined by the *total* dismissal of

⁶⁸ David C. Oh, “Turning Japanese”: Deconstructive Criticism of White Women, the Western Imagination, and Popular Music: Turning Japanese’, *Communication, Culture & Critique* 10, no. 2 (June 2017): 365–81, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cccr.12153>; V&A, ‘Kimono’, *Vam.Ac.Uk* (blog), accessed 25 June 2018, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/kimono>.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 365-81

⁷⁰ Nogueira, ‘Eurovision Song Contest Grand Final 2018’.

⁷¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed., First Vintage Books Edition (New York: Random House, 1979): 285.

tradition – regardless of the nation of origin – as an Orientalist image of Eastern traditional dress has exemplified. The European unity is, instead, is expressed in the participation of the European tradition of claiming international superiority – often through discarding the atrocities of the past and declaring a futurist view of Europe - and residual colonial habits that are frequently overlooked.⁷²

The participation in colonial habits such as orientalism and appropriation by Israel offers the validation and qualification as ‘European’ that being an EU member state does – something that Israel, as a non-member state, does not have access to. The expression of a Unionist national identity is not necessarily a progressive one, in that it does not necessarily promote liberal or left-wing values. This has been proven in European traditions with a long history of racism and colonialism still apparent in the non-academic discourse of Europe.⁷³

Cyprus

Cyprus’ Eurovision 2018 entry was ‘Fuego’ by Eleni Foureira (at 2:01:44 in the Eurovision grand final broadcast).⁷⁴ It was performed in English, which as has been established is an expression of the Unionist national identity in that it is being frequently used as Europe’s common language.⁷⁵ There were a lot of visual similarities with Beyoncé and J-Lo in the staging of this performance, especially with Beyoncé’s aesthetics during her solo career [figs. 6 & 7]. The choreography and costumes held the greatest similarities. This is a common trait in many young female soloists – Beyoncé is an undeniably influential artist in popular music of the past decade and has been described as a trailblazer in modern R+B, so taking inspiration from her and using it in a Eurovision performance comes as little surprise.⁷⁶ Despite the unremarkable musical performance, Cyprus came second, beaten only by Israel. This is most likely because of the familiarity in the imitation of Beyoncé, and the large gay male demographic in the Eurovision audience.

⁷² Ibid., 285

⁷³ Silvia Rodríguez Maeso and Marta Araújo, ‘The (Im)Plausibility of Racism in Europe: Policy Frameworks on Discrimination and Integration’, *Patterns of Prejudice* 51, no. 1 (January 2017): 30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2016.1270500>.

⁷⁴ Nogueira, ‘Eurovision Song Contest Grand Final 2018’; Eleni Foureira, *Fuego*, Eurovision Performance, 2018.

⁷⁵ Nunan, ‘English as a Global Language’: 605.

⁷⁶ Henry Knight, ‘Why Beyoncé Speaks for a Generation’, *BBC Culture* (blog), 15 April 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150415-beyonc-voice-of-a-generation>.

‘Diva culture’ in the gay male community – i.e. the deification of female soloists, often black – is a residual facet of the modern drag queen community of the 20th century that is closely related. The specific deification of black women comes from the long history that the civil rights and LGBT rights movements shared, which is still exemplified in the common celebration of both classic and modern R+B in the gay male community.⁷⁷

The inspiration from Beyoncé is not a nod to the queer community and their presence in Eurovision, as Eleni Foureira is not a queer woman herself, and the expression of queer culture by straight and cisgender people is an intrusion into a sometimes-exclusive community.



[fig.6]: Eleni Foureira’s choreography and costume in the ESC 2018 Final⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Fabian Leach, ‘The Musical Relationship between the Civil Rights and LGBT Rights Movements in the Late Twentieth Century’ (Bachelor’s Dissertation, Anglia Ruskin University, 2017): 27-31; G Schiller, *Before Stonewall* (Peccadillo Pictures, 1984); Ricky Vincent, *Party Music : The inside Story of the Black Panthers’ Band and How Black Power Transformed Soul Music*, 1st ed. (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2013): 202-203.

⁷⁸ Nogueira, ‘Eurovision Song Contest Grand Final 2018’.



[fig.7]: Beyoncé's performance during her 2014 *On The Run* world tour⁷⁹

The use of English language in the lyrics (like with almost all songs performed in Eurovision 2018), except for the single Spanish word in the title and the chorus (Fuego), is like many other Eurovision entries for 2018 an expression of a Unionist national identity. However, the inclusion of Spanish – however rudimentary – is something far more apparent in American-English popular music.⁸⁰ Artists such as Nicki Minaj, Justin Bieber, and Latina artists like Demi Lovato and Christina Aguilera all include Spanish in their music because of the Latinx cultural influence that runs parallel to the American national identity.

American popular music has an international monopoly on the musical performance of the English language – with British and Swedish musicians a close second – as seen in annual reports, showing music industry dominance from the 'big three': Universal, Sony, and Warner music groups controlled 68.7% of music revenue in 2016.⁸¹ After EMI was bought by Universal Music Group in 2012, the three largest labels in the international music industry are now all headquartered in the United States.

⁷⁹ PopCrush, 'Beyoncé's Best Dance Breakdowns - YouTube', YouTube, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWmD3c0Da-s>.

⁸⁰ Pollyanna T. Schroeder, 'The Growth of Latin American Pop Music in the United States', *College Music Symposium* 18, no. 2 (1978): 124–25.

⁸¹ IFPI, 'Global Music Report 2017: Annual State of the Industry' (IFPI, 2017), <http://www.ifpi.org/downloads/GMR2017.pdf>; 'Music Market Shares (Columns)', amCharts, accessed 30 July 2018, <http://live.amcharts.com/NDM3M/>.

The Americanisation of Europe and European music is part and parcel of English becoming the common language across the continent, and the EU's increasing involvement in American trade (regardless of sector) in the European common market. Most, if not all of this trade has been in English – making American culture and art (a product that is traded and is a product of trade) mutually inclusive with the English language.

This was Cyprus' best result in the Eurovision Song Contest since its first appearance in 1981. Cyprus has had a collusive voting partner in Greece the entire time it has been a contestant in the ESC, which comes as little surprise. Greece and Cyprus share a long history as neighbours with a shared culture, making their voting alliance strong.

The televotes, although also reflective of collusive voting blocs, are reflective of the popularity of the performance itself. As mentioned before, the 'diva culture' of the gay male population, and that is so deeply rooted in the LGBT community and culture was most definitely part of the reason Cyprus scored so high with 253 televoting points added to the 183 jury points.

These examples of Eurovision 2018 performances show the diverse origins and circumstances of each performance, and their place on the Eurovision stage. Each nation's performance displays its identity and its place in Europe. However, each nation has expressed – to some degree – the Unionist national identity far more than that of a Nationalist national identity. In a new era of social activism that primarily targets almost all negative facets of nationalism, and the colonial attitudes still evident in Europe and European nationalism, both individuals and collectivities are striving to express an open and united identity that is analogous with the rest of Europe.⁸²

However, this often means undermining and discarding facets of national identity that are found in tradition in order to avoid contradiction and hypocrisy. This hypocrisy is quite frequent, as both a product of lack of foresight and the simple fact that no tradition is pure nor exclusively colonial.

As mentioned before, English is fast becoming the common language of Europe. This linguistic homogenisation of European national identity creates an imbalance in the

⁸² Tatiana Tatarchevskiy, 'The "Popular" Culture of Internet Activism', *New Media & Society* 13, no. 2 (March 2011): 298, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810372785>.

expression of thoughts and ideas, as native English speakers are far more capable of efficiently and eloquently expressing themselves without the necessity for secondary language education, whereas non-native speakers are only able to contribute to the common European discourse after completing further language education in English.

In *Social Class and Access to Higher Education*, Archer points out the many factors that, in conjunction with or included within social class, act as barriers to higher education.⁸³ Although this is a UK-based study, this is also applicable to countries with comparable university or higher education systems, which in Europe accounts for the majority of countries (especially those in Western Europe).

This creates a class-based level of accessibility to this “new” notion of a united Europe, and the Unionist national identity, allowing a divide to develop between the classes and therefore the Nationalist and Unionist expressions of national identity. This class divide is apparent at Eurovision, as the audience and artists are mostly made up of white, middle class people – both in the arena and at home.⁸⁴

It is far easier to approach this as a binary model – tradition and nationalism against modern and unionism – as opposed to attempting a hybridity that honours both ends of the national identity spectrum of expression within the short three minutes available to Eurovision performances. Albeit, these performances are staged with the object of winning first, and expression of identity second. The active and deliberate expression of national identity (which only exists in the time frame of the performance itself, as passive expression of identity is constant throughout the whole of the Eurovision competition through audience celebration and the importance placed on the nations) only exists as a binary because of its diminished priority to winning, and because a binary expression of identity is far easier to actively perform and understand in a short period of time.

⁸³ Loise Archer, ‘Social Class and Access to Higher Education A Report of Findings from the Social Class and Widening Participation to HE Project, University of North London’, *Institute for Policy*, 2000: 5–14, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.195.6550&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-14

Chapter 3: Function and Interpretation of the Eurovision Song, and its Lifecycle and Temporality

This chapter will explore the effect of the temporality of the Eurovision song and its performance, using the definition of Eurovision song temporality found in Bohlman's chapter in Dafni Tragaki's *Empire of Song*. He stresses the importance of time and time constraints – by which he means the allocated slots of 3 minutes for each performance, and the cemented boundaries either side of the performance time - in the making and performing of Eurovision songs, and the distinct temporal boundaries that bracket each allocated performance.⁸⁵ Using this definition, along with the analyses in the previous chapter outlining the specific expressions of national identity, the function and interpretive experience of a Eurovision song both inside and outside of the Eurovision arena can be described.⁸⁶

To begin, I shall define what temporality within the realms of Eurovision is in this thesis. The Eurovision Song Contest and its entire spectacle, according to Bohlman, is punctuated by 'postcards'⁸⁷ – short pre-recorded performances that introduce each performing nation while simultaneously announcing the end of the previous performance, taking it off the stage and out of the limelight. This streamlining of the billing clearly brackets the beginning and end of each performance and the expressions of national identity that are with them and marks their temporal boundaries.

The songs used in this case study, as in accordance with the Eurovision 2018 rules, were announced after September 1st, 2017 and could only be publicly released in the entrant country's market after the final performance. The rules also state that a Eurovision song must be wholly original: it cannot be a cover, nor does it sample an already existing song. These rules control the composition and release of these songs used in the case study, and ensure their purpose is exclusively for Eurovision and the performance in the contest.

⁸⁵ Philip V. Bohlman, *Empire of Song: Europe and Nation in the Eurovision Song Contest: Tempus Edax Rerum - Time and the Making of the Eurovision Song*, ed. Dafni Tragaki, Europea: Ethnomusicologies and Modernities 15 (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc, 2013): 7-16.

⁸⁶ Miklitsch, *Roll over Adorno*: 4, 54; Adorno, 'On Popular Music': 1.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 7-16

The fact that the songs are composed specifically for Eurovision⁸⁸ makes them very one-dimensional – they are to fill the single purpose of representing a country on the Eurovision stage, and once that is fulfilled and the allocated time is up, they are no longer required for their designed purpose.⁸⁹ However, this does not mean that they are completely redundant and discarded, as the audience changes how they engage with the music once outside of the Eurovision arena (from attending a performance to listening to music), and therefore the way they utilise the music.⁹⁰ Due to the Eurovision song existing only for the purpose of Eurovision, the expression of national identity displayed and associated during the performance is constantly associated with the song, and this association cannot be removed.⁹¹

The purpose and function of the Eurovision song in the Eurovision arena is to be a vehicle for the performance of national identity. The Eurovision Song Contest is the entity that enables this expression and is the reason for it to exist in the first place. Eurovision is a stage on which national identity in the context of Europe is “enacted and contested.”⁹²

Bolin compares the Eurovision Song Contest to the World’s Fair – an exposition of each country’s talent and technology, where countries can promote themselves and their industries.⁹³ He uses Estonia’s branding campaign leading up to Eurovision 2002 as an example of this and cites this to be at least partially responsible for the country’s success in Eurovision 2002.

As something that only exists for Eurovision, the Eurovision song is of course connected and closely associated with the Eurovision Song Contest. Because of this, its predetermined function is defined in the exposition nature of the Eurovision song contest itself.

⁸⁸ Eurovision Song Contest, *Songwriting for the Eurovision Song Contest: Interview with Thomas G:Son*, accessed 29 June 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCBT3tLvZel>; Ewan Spence, *ESC Insight | How To Write A Song For The Eurovision Song Contest*, accessed 29 June 2018, <http://escinsight.com/2016/09/01/eurovision-song-contest-songwriter/>.

⁸⁹ Bolin, ‘Visions of Europe’: 193-194.

⁹⁰ Claire Rich, ‘Attending A Concert Is So Much More Than Just Listening To Music’, *The Odyssey Online*, 27 November 2017, <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/attending-concerts-much-more-than-listening-music>.

⁹¹ Eurovision Song Contest, *Songwriting for the Eurovision Song Contest*; Spence, ‘ESC Insight | How To Write A Song For The Eurovision Song Contest’; Jordan, *The Modern Fairy Tale*: 49-73.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 49-73

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 193-194

The popular music sphere, as defined by Adorno in his 1941 thesis 'On Popular Music', is a part of 'mass culture' – which for Adorno was conflated with unacademic and plebeian art. This was later redefined and equalised by Miklitsch in his 2006 book aptly titled 'Roll Over Adorno', placing both of Adorno's spheres of 'popular' and 'serious' music on the same analytical and interpretive level. The 'interpretive experience' that is unique to the popular music sphere is not the same for Eurovision songs because of the predetermined function that separates the two, and thus predetermines the interpretive experience.⁹⁴

Unlike music from the larger popular music sphere, Eurovision songs have a purpose and function that affords little freedom on the fundamental aspects of the songs composition within the Eurovision rules.⁹⁵ This purpose and function – the representation of a nation to an international audience – also carries into the utilisation and consumption of the Eurovision song post-Eurovision. This purpose and function follows the Eurovision song throughout its lifecycle in the Eurovision process in three temporal stages:⁹⁶

1. Pre-Eurovision

This is the time before the final performance on the Eurovision stage in which the songs gather anticipation for the premiere of the performance – which often takes priority over the song itself in the spectacle of Eurovision.⁹⁷ As per the rules of Eurovision 2018, no entry song could be publicly announced before September 1st, 2017, nor could it be released into the entry country's market until after the performance.⁹⁸ This imposition of Eurovision control over the song's lifespan is determined before it is commercially or publicly available, already removing it from the popular music sphere. The concept of

⁹⁴ Miklitsch, *Roll over Adorno*: 4, 54; Adorno, 'On Popular Music': 1.

⁹⁵ Gad Yair and Daniel Maman, 'The Persistent Structure of Hegemony in the Eurovision Song Contest', *Acta Sociologica* 39, no. 3 (1996): 312–13; EBU, 'Rules - Eurovision Song Contest'.

⁹⁶ Ellie Chalkley, 'The Hipster's Guide To The Eurovision Song Contest', *ESC Insight - Home of the Unofficial Eurovision Song Contest Podcast* (blog), 27 January 2016, <http://escinsight.com/2016/01/27/hipsters-memes-eurovision-song-contest/>.

⁹⁷ Rehberg, 'Winning Failure. Queer Nationality at the Eurovision Song Contest'; 'Eurovision Song Contest – More than Music', accessed 29 June 2018, <https://eurovision.tv/story/eurovision-song-contest-more-than-music>.

⁹⁸ EBU, 'Rules - Eurovision Song Contest'.

nationhood and national identity is already attached to the song as soon as it becomes a 'Eurovision song'.⁹⁹

2. During Eurovision

This is the climactic point in the saga of the Eurovision song – its destiny as a vehicle for an expression of national identity is being fulfilled in front of an audience all across the globe.¹⁰⁰ This final climactic performance in the arena can be likened to international sport, with the unadulterated glee and festivities of Christmas.¹⁰¹

3. Post-Eurovision

The song is still a Eurovision song after the Eurovision contest, as its genesis and function would not exist without the prerequisite of the Eurovision Song Contest. It still maintains the expression of national identity found in its performance on the Eurovision stage, but its function now takes a memorial role as a residual artefact of the performance.¹⁰²

Eurovision, like international sport is seasonal - there is a preliminary run-up to the event in which the excitement and anticipation grow, the festival itself, and the digestion and reminiscence following the festivities.¹⁰³ Because of this, Eurovision and Eurovision songs are easily forgotten or dismissed in the months between each broadcast of the contest every year by the general public.¹⁰⁴ This seasonal interest in Eurovision, like the specificity of function as mentioned before, means that Eurovision songs cannot be considered part of the larger popular music sphere.

⁹⁹ Jordan, *The Modern Fairy Tale*: 49-73.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 49-73

¹⁰¹ Baker, 'The "Gay Olympics"?: 99; Rehberg, 'Winning Failure. Queer Nationality at the Eurovision Song Contest': 60.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 49-73

¹⁰³ Baker, 'The "Gay Olympics"?: 99; Yair, "'Unite Unite Europe" The Political and Cultural Structures of Europe as Reflected in the Eurovision Song Contest': 149.

¹⁰⁴ Chalkley, 'The Hipster's Guide To The Eurovision Song Contest'.

The final Eurovision performance is regarded as the product on which the contest is judged.¹⁰⁵ The recording is secondary – albums of the Eurovision finalists are sold as souvenirs to be used after the performance. In contrast, popular music artists use live performance as a vehicle for their music (as evident in the increasing revenue percentage from performing rights),¹⁰⁶ whereas in Eurovision the music is the vehicle for the performance.¹⁰⁷

Moving on from the definition of Eurovision temporality, in this chapter I shall discuss how Eurovision songs exist outside of the Eurovision Song Contest and the larger popular music sphere. Because Eurovision songs are written specifically for Eurovision as defined by the rules for Eurovision 2018, and therefore have a purpose and function that is limited by the rules and regulations of the contest, as well as the purpose and function of the contest itself as a celebration of nationhood through music, the Eurovision songs cannot be considered a part of the larger popular music sphere.¹⁰⁸

Now that the way Eurovision songs exist outside of the Eurovision Song Contest performance has been discussed, I shall explore how the song's function is maintained post-Eurovision – the third of the temporal stages of a Eurovision song. In this final stage, the songs no longer have the same anticipation associated with them as stated in the first temporal stage of pre-Eurovision and have fulfilled their function on the Eurovision stage in the second temporal stage of during Eurovision. They are now celebratory of the performance and contest itself, and the expression of national identity that is in it. As established in the previous chapters, expression of national identity is inherent in a Eurovision performance. Because of the celebratory nature of a post-Eurovision Eurovision song, this national identity – however it is expressed – is celebrated too.¹⁰⁹

Because of this associated national identity that is expressed in the performance, and already established as an inherent aspect of the Eurovision song by the very nature of the Eurovision Song Contest as an international competition and the celebratory frame in

¹⁰⁵ 'The Voting: How Does It Work?', accessed 29 June 2018, <https://eurovision.tv/story/the-voting-how-does-it-work>.

¹⁰⁶ IFPI, 'Global Music Report 2017: Annual State of the Industry'.

¹⁰⁷ Bolin, 'Visions of Europe': 193-94.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 49-93

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 49-73

which a Eurovision song is viewed through post-Eurovision, the function the song takes on is that of a memorial celebration of national identity in the manner in which it was expressed in the performance of the song during Eurovision.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, popular music outside of Eurovision does not have quite so defined temporal boundaries, nor does it constantly refer back to a function.¹¹¹ In other words, once it enters the public realm it is far freer in function and how it is used.

The three temporal stages outline the lifecycle of a Eurovision song - as defined by Chalkley when (somewhat tenuously) comparing the Eurovision song lifecycle to that of an internet meme - and how the circumstances under which it is created determine its function and purpose from its initial commercial release, to its use outside of Eurovision after fulfilling its function.¹¹²

The Eurovision Song Contest determines the function of the Eurovision song as a vehicle for the performance, of which is inherently an expression of national identity on an international stage. When a Eurovision song is used after the performance it was featured in the Eurovision contest, it is in a frame of celebration and fond retrospection of the performance and therefore the expression of national identity that is inherent in a Eurovision performance.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 49-73

¹¹¹ Bohlman, *Empire of Song*: 7-16.

¹¹² Chalkley, 'The Hipster's Guide To The Eurovision Song Contest'; Bolin, 'Visions of Europe': 193-94.

¹¹³ Ibid., 49-73

Conclusion

National identity expression is inherent in Eurovision given the fact it is an international competition in which nations are represented by musical performance. The way national identity is expressed, however, is dependent on the content of the performance in relation to the culture of the nation or region that is represented. This expression can be divided into either Unionist or Nationalist expression of national identity, or as Smith described it – European or National identity.¹¹⁴ This is dependent on many factors, but as exemplified in the case studies, none more so than language, and the use of English by non-English speaking countries (i.e. all but the United Kingdom, Ireland, and now Australia). English, in the arena of Eurovision, is the linguistic expression of a Unionist national identity, in that it is acknowledging and engaging in the development of English becoming the common language of Europe – not only in politics, but also among the general population.¹¹⁵

This Unionist national identity, expressed in the linguistic choices of the composers and performers, is the alternative to the Nationalist national identity and its expression through performance on the international stage that is Eurovision. This Nationalist national identity is expressed through the utilisation of nation or region-specific traditions in a Eurovision performance. Although language is a key component in this, musical styling, costume, and choreography are all major signifiers of tradition – and therefore the expression of national identity on the Eurovision stage.

Although Eurovision is not political by design, the fact that nations are competing in an international arena and their performances are under heavy scrutiny leads to an inevitable politicisation of the song and performance in relation with the government of that nation and its actions despite the Eurovision rules attempting to prevent any political statements being made on the stage. This contest of expressions is the medium in which a nation defines itself through the expression of national identity.

¹¹⁴ Smith, 'National Identity and the Idea of European Unity': 58-60.

¹¹⁵ Nunan, 'English as a Global Language': 605.

As discussed in the final chapter, the Eurovision song has a three-part lifecycle that marks each point in how it is used, and how it relates to the expression of national identity.¹¹⁶ The Eurovision song has a function to serve on the Eurovision stage, but not elsewhere.¹¹⁷ This function is expected of it before the performance and is then attached to it along with the national identity it expresses after the performance. This function, as defined by the nature of the Eurovision Song Contest as an international competition, and the national identity that is expressed in the fulfilment of that function, is what defines the interpretive experience of the Eurovision song through its lifecycle. Because of this concrete function – predetermined by the Eurovision Song Contest – Eurovision songs are different to standard pop songs in how they are interpreted and therefore cannot be considered part of the larger popular music sphere.¹¹⁸

National identity in Eurovision manifests not only in the performance as an active expression of such, but also in the fact a Eurovision song is exactly that: a Eurovision song. The Eurovision song is written specifically for the contest, and therefore is written specifically to be a vehicle for the expression of national identity.¹¹⁹ It is inherent in Eurovision, and therefore the performances and songs on which the Eurovision Song Contest is based. Because of this, Eurovision songs are outside of the popular music sphere and cannot be considered pop music, regardless of aesthetics.

¹¹⁶ Chalkley, 'The Hipster's Guide To The Eurovision Song Contest'.

¹¹⁷ Bolin, 'Visions of Europe': 193-94.

¹¹⁸ Adorno, 'On Popular Music': 1.

¹¹⁹ Jordan, *The Modern Fairy Tale*: 49-73

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